

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Nebraska

Environmental Education Master Plan



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Cover: *'Nebraska State Capitol Peregrine Falcon Event'* and *'Cattle Roundup'*

Inside: *'Sandhill Crane'*

- courtesy of NEBRASKAland Magazine/Nebraska Game and Parks Commission.

Cover: *'Children Observing Bird'*

Inside: *'Canoers,' 'Child with Magnifier,'* and *'Sunflower'*

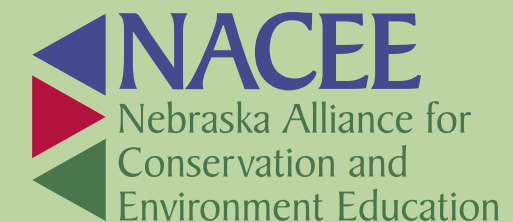
- courtesy of Mark Humpert.

Building Conservation and Environmental
Education for the Future

2005

The complete Master Plan can be found at the NACEE website: www.nacee.org,
or contact NACEE, P.O. Box 85344, Lincoln NE, 68501.

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www.nacee.org

“Nebraskans have a proud history of working together to find solutions when challenges arise. With this plan we now have a vision for the future that will help us raise our citizens’ awareness and knowledge about the environment.”

Mary Harding, Executive Director, Nebraska Environmental Trust



“The Nebraska Environmental Education Master Plan provides a great opportunity for Nebraska citizens to further enhance critical thinking and problem solving skills. The plan encourages individuals to look at all sides of the issues and make informed and realistic decisions about the issues facing Nebraska.”

Dean Edson, Executive Director, Nebraska Association of Resources Districts



Introduction

In 2005, Nebraska’s conservation and education community completed the state’s first Environmental Education Master Plan – a historic achievement. The Master Plan was developed from input received from over 185 Nebraskans who attended more than a dozen public input meetings, participated in personal interviews, and completed surveys. The planning process spanned nearly four years and was coordinated by the Nebraska Alliance of Conservation and Environment Education (NACEE). The resulting Master Plan provides a visionary and far-reaching blueprint for Nebraska that can be used by organizations, agencies, policy makers, and the public to better focus and coordinate environmental education efforts.

The University of Nebraska in collaboration with NACEE conducted Nebraska’s first survey of conservation and environmental literacy in 2003. Although the results showed that Nebraskans strongly support environmental education and are committed to a healthy environment, there are some critical knowledge gaps. The Environmental Education Master Plan addresses these gaps and seeks a more unified approach to conservation and environmental education in Nebraska. The complete Environmental Education Master Plan and Environmental Literacy Survey are available from NACEE at www.nacee.org.

Environmental Education - is a learning process that increases people’s knowledge and awareness about the environment and associated challenges, develops the necessary skills and expertise to address the challenges, and fosters attitudes, motivations, and commitments to make informed decisions and take responsible action.

Source: U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (1996)

Organization

The Nebraska Alliance for Conservation and Environment Education (NACEE) is a volunteer-driven 501(c)(3) organization that exists to promote conservation and environment education in Nebraska. The organization is overseen by a 12-member Board of Directors. Sponsored projects include conferences, newsletters, a statewide environmental literacy survey, and the strategic planning process outlined in this document. For further information regarding NACEE, please visit www.nacee.org.

Mission

To facilitate and promote conservation and environment education for all Nebraska.

Vision

NACEE seeks to foster an environmentally literate citizenry in Nebraska and to serve as a leader in conservation and environmental education.

Acknowledgements

We acknowledge the funding support of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency’s Office of Environmental Education (Grant # NE-83058101), without which this project would not have been possible. We thank everyone who shared their thoughts, time, and efforts to make this plan a reality.



“This well thought out plan will help bring people of all professions together to gain a better understanding of the diverse natural resources of Nebraska and the need to be good stewards of those resources.”

Gene D. Mack, Project Leader, Rainwater Basin Wetland Management District, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service



“No student should graduate from a Nebraska high school without a fundamental understanding of environmental principles. This plan provides guidance to schools as they define essential learning for all students.”

Jim Woodland, Director, Science Education, Nebraska Department of Education

Goal and Objectives of Environmental Education Master Plan

Goal

Advance understanding of the conservation, restoration, and protection of Nebraska’s natural environment by providing a blueprint to improve, build, and promote quality conservation and environmental education in Nebraska.

Objective 1

Increase the opportunities for Nebraska residents of all ages to enhance their awareness and understanding of Nebraska’s natural heritage.

Objective 2

Increase funding for environmental education in Nebraska.

Objective 3

Promote collaboration and partnerships among a diversity of environmental education stakeholders.

Objective 4

Ensure that environmental education reflects Nebraska’s ethnic and cultural diversity.

Objective 5

Improve the quality and accessibility of environmental education resources.

Objective 6

Increase the number of **formal** educators from all disciplines who have the knowledge, time, skills, and confidence to integrate environmental education into their curricula.

Objective 7

Increase the number of **non-formal** educators from all disciplines who have the knowledge, skills, and confidence to participate in environmental education.

Objective 8

Encourage and assist in the development of cross-disciplinary and Nebraska-specific environmental education curricula and materials.

Objective 9

Develop a strong communication system that will allow environmental educators to communicate with each other and to obtain information about new and existing environmental education resources.

Objective 10

Encourage monitoring and evaluation of environmental education effectiveness and outcomes.

Plan Implementation and Evaluation

This plan will be widely distributed to organizations, agencies, and individuals who are key to successful implementation in Nebraska. NACEE will convene an ad hoc evaluation committee that will be responsible for reporting progress on implementation of the master plan. The evaluation committee will meet annually, a more extensive evaluation of the plan will be done at five year intervals, and adaptive management will be used to update the plan.